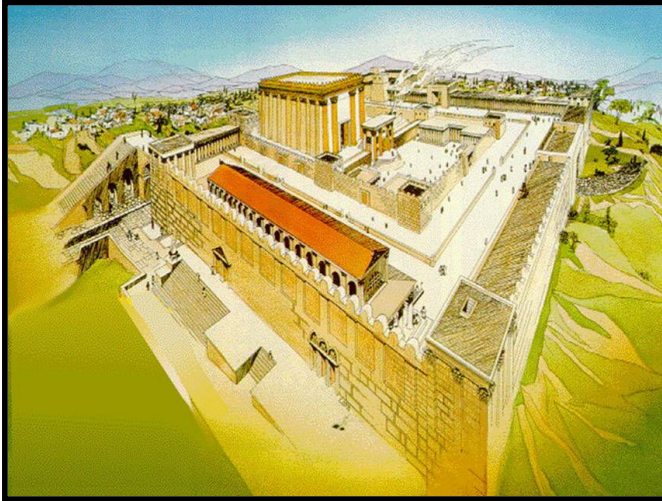


The Messiah משיח

7. Objections to Isaiah Chapters 7 and 9



The Tanakh (Hebrew Bible) proclaims the coming of Messiah, will be a descendent of David, (Son of David). When we compare the Jewish and Christian understanding of who the Messiah is, we see two different people. Although there are similarities between the Christian and Jewish views of Messiah, the differences outweigh any similarities.

First, let us compare what's similar between the two views of Messiah. From a Christian point of view, many of the qualifications for the *Messiah of Judaism* reach fulfillment at the *Second Coming*. The Messiah will rule from Jerusalem over the nations, during his reign Israel will be blessed above the nations. Leading up to his coming, Israel will be persecuted by the nations (Gentiles) and at the end, when it seems like all hope is lost Messiah,

Son of David, will come to Israel's rescue and defeat the nations. Many of these beliefs are similar between the Jewish and Christian views on the role Messiah will play.

Similarities of Messianic View

Event	Jewish View ¹	Christian View ²
Descendent of Man and Abraham	Son of man Son of Abraham	Son of Man Son of Abraham
Descendent of David	Son of David	Son of David
Rescues Israel from the nations (Gentiles)	Comes riding on the clouds or on a donkey depending on Israel	Messiah (returns) at the second coming as the nations surround Israel.
Jerusalem	Messiah rules from Jerusalem over the nations	Messiah (Christ) rules over the nations
Length of rule Israel	Eternal	Eternal
	Made chief among the nations. Blessed by God	Made chief among the nations. Blessed by God

The differences revolve around the role and nature Messiah would play in the world. Jews reject the idea of the Messiah fulfilling two roles, one role, "*Suffering Messiah*" and the second role as "*King Messiah*". Judaism also rejects as blasphemous the idea, that the Messiah would be the *Son of God*, very God, not to mention the idea that as God, He died for the sins of the world in his physical body.

¹ The Jewish view presented here is an Orthodox view, which believes in a personal messiah, and a literal resurrection, as opposed to the Reform positions, which do not believe in either.

² The Christian view presented here is "Dispensational" which is a literal understanding of the Bible, as opposed to others. The Dispensational view believes God's promises to Israel are irrevocable and will be fulfilled according to God's plan.

Differences of Messianic views

Event	Jewish View	Christian View
God	According to Judaism Messiah is only an man, and nothing more, greater than Moses, but only a man.	Christians view the Messiah as God who came in the flesh, to pay for the sins of mankind, fulfilling prophecy.
Son of God	Jews view Messiah as only the "Son of man" descendent of David	Christians view Messiah, as not only a "Son of David" but as God who came into the world through "Virgin birth" and thus becoming "Son of God"
Dying for sin	According to Maimonides, if the person who claims to be Messiah dies, he cannot be Messiah. Let alone die for the sins of the world.	Christians view Messiah death as the ultimate atonement for sin. Messiah death paid for the sins of the world.

The differences between the Christian and Jewish views of Messiah and their justification for each, turns to scripture. The Christian's view of Jesus as the "Suffering Messiah" is clearly in the Jewish scriptures, the Hebrew Bible. Jewish interpreters reply, "Not so!, Christians are not interpreting scripture correctly", they say.

Two messianic prophecies Christians claim speaks to the person and role of Messiah, and his divine nature are in Isaiah 7:14 and Isaiah 9:6-7. Let us examine them separately, although they are part of the same unit in Isaiah, both proclaimed during a precarious time in Israel's history. When than nation of Judah's very survival was in question. Israel and Syria formed an alliance against the southern nation, and were about to replace the House of David.

Historical background to Isaiah 7 to 12



Tiglath-Pileser III, King of Assyria seen here accepting homage from other kings (II Kings 16:7)

To understand the context of these prophecies, we need first to understand what events surrounded Israel at this time. In Isaiah chapter 7, Isaiah delivers message to *Ahaz* king of Judah.

Ahaz, the father of Hezekiah, was a wicked king in Judah, the 13th in line from King David. During his reign, *Rezin* king of Syria and *Pekah* king of the Israel³, the northern tribes formed an alliance against Ahaz. Syria and Israel were intent on replacing Ahaz, with another king,

son of Tabel (Isaiah 7:6). All hope seemed lost for Judah, they had already been defeated by Pekah king of Israel, the results were horrendous, 120,000 men of Judah were killed and 200,000 women and children taken captive (2 Chronicles. 28:5-8). Syria, allied with Israel, was intent on replacing Ahaz, and forming an alliance against *Assyria* to the east.

Ahaz was a faithless king, who worshipped the Baals, sacrificed his children, burned incense in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, and sacrificed on the high places and under green trees. Because Ahaz and the nation of Judah had fallen away, the Lord delivered them into the hands of their enemies, resulting in their hopeless condition (2 Chronicles 28:1-4).

³ Israel became two nations with the North being called Israel and the South being called Judah. The 10 tribes were considered Israel. While Judah and Benjamin consisted of Judah.

Ahaz, rather than turning to the Lord, turned to Assyria for help. He sent messengers to the king of Assyria requesting help against Israel and Syria. Judah became a vassal to Assyria, during the reign of Ahaz, because he was faithless.

This is the scene surrounding Isaiah 7 to 12, where Isaiah proclaims the prophecies revealed in Isaiah 7:14 and Isaiah 9:6-5.

Isaiah 7:14

Isaiah the prophet is sent to faithless Ahaz, to give him message of hope. The attack of Syria and Israel is not just on Ahaz, but on the "House of David", which they plan on replacing with their own puppet king, son of Tabel. Isaiah meets Ahaz with his son and proclaims to him the "Word of the Lord".

3 Then the Lord said to Isaiah, "Go out now to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-Jashub your son, at the end of the aqueduct from the upper pool, on the highway to the Fuller's Field,
 4 "and say to him: 'Take heed, and be quiet; do not fear or be fainthearted for these two stubs of smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria, and the son of Remaliah.
 5 'Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah have plotted evil against you, saying,
 6 "Let us go up against Judah and trouble it, and let us make a gap in its wall for ourselves, and set a king over them, the son of Tabel"
 7 thus says the Lord God: "It shall not stand, Nor shall it come to pass". **Isaiah 7:3-7**

The Lord, through Isaiah then asks Ahaz to ask for a sign, which Ahaz refuses, demonstrating his faithless nature. The Lord then replies to Ahaz, referring to him as the "House of David".

13 Then he said, "Hear now, O house of David! Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will you weary my God also? 14 "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.
Isaiah 7:13-14

Matthew at the birth of Jesus, applies these verses to his birth. Quoting from the Septuagint (LXX) Matthew writes,

22 So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying:
 23 "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us." **Matthew 1:22-23**

Jewish Interpretation of Isaiah 7:14

Jewish interpreters reject this interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 with several points, they see Isaiah 7:14 referring to a sign during the time of Ahaz, demonstrating before the child has the knowledge, to refuse "Wrong and right" the two kings of Israel and Syria will be destroyed. They say this is a near term sign, and does not refer to the Messiah.

Various translations of Isaiah 7:14

New King James	"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.
New International Version	Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.
Douay Rheims	Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign. Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel.
Jewish Publication Society (JPS)	Assuredly, my Lord will give you a sign of His own accord! Look, the young woman is with child and about to give birth to a son. Let her name him Immanuel.
Art Scroll Tanach	Therefore, my Lord Himself will give you a sign; Behold, the maiden will become pregnant and bear a son, and she will name him Immanuel.

Objection 1: *Isaiah is not talking about a virgin, Matthew incorrectly translated the Hebrew word, עלמה `almah as virgin. The word means “Young maiden” and not virgin.*

Reply to Objection 1

A. The Septuagint

Matthew quotes from the Greek translation of the Tanakh, (LXX) the Septuagint, which was translated before Jesus was even born. According to history, the translation was done at the request of *Ptolemy II Philadelphus* (284-247 B.C.), he requested the “Laws” of the Jews translated into Greek. At that time, there was a sizable Greek speaking Jewish community in Alexandria, Egypt. The translation of the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures followed the Law.

These translators also translated Isaiah 7:14, before Jesus was born and before there was any reason to “mistranslate” the Hebrew word עלמה `almah from **virgin** to **young maiden**. The word though, not exclusively meaning “Virgin” was understood by the context to mean “Virgin”. The Septuagint translates **almah** to παρθενος *Parthenos*, which in almost all cases means a women who has not had sexual intercourse. The Hebrew translators who translated the book of Isaiah into Greek understood this is what Isaiah meant, when he used the term.

B. If Isaiah did not mean “Virgin” what kind of “sign” is a young maiden giving birth.

The whole purpose of here is to offer Ahaz a sign. Ahaz, was without hope, he was facing the armies of Syria and Israel who were combining, to set up their own king and remove the “House of David” from the throne over Judah and Jerusalem. Therefore, the Lord provides a sign, אִתָּהּ *'owth*, meaning a token, ensign, standard, miracle, proof. God challenges, Ahaz to ask for a difficult sign, which Ahaz refuses to ask for. God

"Ask a sign for yourself from the Lord your God; ask it either in the depth or in the height above."
Isaiah 7:11

What was this sign? The sign the Lord, through Isaiah offered Ahaz was this, the *almah* will have a son named *Immanuel* and before, the son has the ability to choose, evil or good, Israel and Syria will loose *their kings*, *Pekah*, king of Israel and *Rezin*, king of Syria.

"For before the Child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that you dread will be forsaken by both her kings. Isaiah 7:16

Sign Qualifiers	Test	Hezekiah	Yeshua
<i>Alma</i> (Virgin/Maiden) bears a child	Did a virgin/maiden bear a child?	Hezekiah was 9-years old when his father, Ahaz became king. ⁴	
Before the child shall know...to refuse the evil and chose good	When did the land of Syria and Israel loose their kings? When did the child know to choose evil and good?	P	
The land you dread	When did the Kings of	Pekah dethroned in	

⁴ Ahaz, Hezekiah’s father was 20 when he took the throne and he reigned for 16 years, therefore he died at the age of 36. (2 Chronicles 28:1). Hezekiah was 25 when he became king, succeeding Ahaz making him 9-years old when his father Ahaz became king, since he father reigned 16 years. (2 Chronicles 29:1). When Isaiah approached Ahaz (Isaiah 7), Hezekiah was at least 9-years old. So he could not be the subject.

(Syria and Israel) will loose their kings.	Syria and Israel cease?	the 12 th year of Ahaz, Hezekiah was at least 22-years old.	
will loose their kings	Were the Kings, Pekah and Rezin deposed?	Yes	Yes

Isaiah was assuring a hopeless, faithless king, who was sat on the throne of David, that both of these kings would be destroyed. Ahaz was to believe the Lord, and not doubt (Isaiah 7:9). Ahaz however failed this test and called out to Assyria for help. The Assyrians came in 732 B.C. and crushed Syria killing Rezin and taking the inhabitants of Damascus captive. Ahaz met Tiglath-Pileser III in Damascus, submitting to Assyrian authority (2 Kings 16:10). Ahaz was a faithless king who rejected the Lord's promise. In Damascus, Ahaz had the priest *Urijah* make a copy of the altar of the pagan gods to replace the altar for the Lord.

Isaiah warned Ahaz, the Assyrians would one day pass over the land of Judah like they are passing over the land of Israel to the north. This theme of an Assyrian assault on Judah continues to chapter 12. During this period clear references are made to the coming of Messiah. In Isaiah 9:7, reference is made to the eternal throne of David, clearly Messianic. Isaiah 11 looks forward to the "Branch" from Jesse, David's father, who will "Strike the earth with the rod of his mouth".

Unlike his father, Hezekiah saw the miraculous deliverance of Jerusalem, because he trusted the Lord unlike Ahaz (Isaiah 37). Ahaz, relied on Assyria to deliver him from Israel and Syria rather than Lord. Assyria would be in control of Judah until, the Lord delivers the nation in Hezekiah reign.

C. The Hebrew בתולה *B^ethuwlah* does not exclusively apply to "virgin" either.

Jewish interpreters make the charge that the proper name for virgin is בתולה *B^ethuwlah* not *Almah* the word used in Isaiah 7:14. Dr. Michael Brown responds to the charge that *B^ethuwlah* alone can exclusively mean Virgin in the Hebrew Bible.

Actually, there is no single word in biblical Hebrew that always and only means "virgin" (called in Latin *virgo intacta*). As for the Hebrew word *betulah*, while it often refers to a virgin in the Hebrew Scriptures, more often than not it has no reference to virginity but simply means "young woman, maiden." In fact, out of the fifty times the word *betulah* occurs in the Tanakh, the NJPSV translates it as "maiden"—rather than "virgin"—thirty-one times! This means that more than three out of five times that *betulah* occurs in the Hebrew Bible, it is translated as "maiden" rather than "virgin" by the most widely used Jewish translation of our day. Not only so, but the Stone edition of the Tanakh, reflecting traditional Orthodox scholarship, frequently translates *betulah* as "maiden" as well. Even in verses where the translation of "virgin" is appropriate for *betulah*, a qualifying phrase is sometimes added, as in Genesis 24:16: "The maiden (*na'arah*) was beautiful, a virgin (*betulah*) whom no man had known" Obviously, if *betulah* clearly and unequivocally meant "virgin" here, there would be no need to explain that this *betulah* never had intercourse with a man.... How redundant! What other kind of virgin is there?...

Even more clear is Isaiah 47:1, rendered in the NIV as, "Go down, sit in the dust, Virgin Daughter of Babylon; sit on the ground without a throne, Daughter of the Babylonians. No more will you be called tender or delicate." Yet a few verses later we read that this "Virgin" will lose *her husband* and *her children* on the very same day!⁵

Isaiah 9:5-6 (6-7)

These verses in Isaiah are quoted often, demonstrating the Messiah's nature and character of foretold seven-hundred years before he was even born. Here, Isaiah proclaims the Messiah would be a *son of man* by being *born* as a child, and at the same time be a "son" given. He goes on to identify the nature of this "son" and "child" by identifying him as "Mighty God", "Everlasting Father" and "Prince of Peace" terms only used here in the Tanakh, except for Mighty God (*El*

⁵ Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus Volume 3, Pgs. 21-22. Baker Books 2003

Gabor) which appears two other times in Isaiah 10:21 and Ezekiel 32:21. The question is, are these verses speaking about the Messiah, or somebody else? Are Christians wrongly interpreting these verses?

Various Translations of Isaiah 9:6-7(5-6)

New King James Version	6 For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. Isaiah 9:6-7
Douay Rheims	6 For a CHILD IS BORN to us, and a son is given to us, and the government is upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace. 7 His empire shall be multiplied, and there shall be no end of peace: he shall sit upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom; to establish it and strengthen it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth and for ever: the zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this
NIV	6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.
Jewish Study Bible (JPS) Tanakh	5 For a child has been born to us, a son has been given us. And authority has settled on his shoulders. He has been named "The Mighty God is planning grace; The Eternal Father, a peaceable ruler"— 6 In token of abundant authority And of peace without limit Upon David's Throne and kingdom, That it may be firmly established In justice and equity Now and evermore. The zeal of the LORD of Hosts Shall bring this to pass. ⁶

.Jewish Interpretation of these verses

The Jewish interpreters see the meaning here much different from Christians. Some interpreters see these verses fulfilled in the Hezekiah, the royal son, who sat on the throne of David, where his father Ahaz sat. Other Jewish interpreters clearly see this as messianic in nature, the names referring to the Messiah according to the Talmud and midrashic. Abraham ibn Ezra agrees the names refer to the Messiah. Quoting from Michael Brown's work, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus volume III*, he has the following footnote regarding the names of Messiah, quoting from Talmudic and midrashic sources.

"R. Yose the Galilean said: "The name of the Messiah is Peace, for it is said, Everlasting Father, Prince Peace" (Midrash Pereq Shalom, p. 101); "The Messiah is called by eight names: Yinnon[see Psalm 72:17], Tzemach [e.g. Jer. 23:5]; Pele' [Wonderful, Isa. 9:6(5)], Yo'etz[Counselor, Isa. 9:6(5)], Mashiach [Messiah], El[God, Isa. 9:6(5)], Gibbor[Hero. 9:6(5) and Avi Ad Shalom [Eternal Father of Peace, Isa. 9:6(5); see Deuteronomy Rabbah 1:20⁷

The *Targum Jonathan* also references these verses in Isaiah as referring to the Messiah.

"For to us a son is born, to us a son is given; and he shall receive the Law upon him to keep it; and his name is called from of Old, wonderful, Counselor, Eloha, The Mighty, Abiding to Eternity, The Messiah, because peace shall be multiplied on us in his days." **Targum Jonathan**

⁶ The Note from the JPS Translation regarding these verses is as follows: "The Mighty God...ruler" This long sentence is the throne name of the royal child. Semitic names often consist of sentences that describe God; thus the name Isaiah in Hebrew means "The LORD saves"; Hezekiah, "The LORD strengthens"; in Akkadian, the name of the Babylonian king Merodach-baladan (Isa. 39:1) means "the god Marduk has provided an heir." These names do not describe that person who holds them but the god whom the parents worship. Similarly, the name given to the child in this v. does not describe that child or attribute divinity to him, contrary to classical Christian readings of this messianic verse.

⁷ Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus Volume 3, Pgs. 210, Footnote #86. Baker Books 2003

The Midrash on Deuteronomy also references these verses as referring to the Messiah.

Rabbi Samuel, the son of Nachman, said, 'When Esau met Jacob he said unto him, "My brother Jacob, let us walk together in this world. Jacob replied: Let my Lord, I pray thee, pass over before his servant" (Genesis 33:14) What is the meaning of, "I pray thee, pass over? Jacob said to him; I have yet to supply the Messiah, of whom it is said: "Unto us a child is born" **Midrash (Deuteronomy 2;4)**

Objection 1: *These verses do not refer to the Messiah but to Hezekiah.*

Reply to Objection 1

Clearly based on the above quotes, the idea of this being messianic in nature is not a non-Jewish understanding of scripture. Those who deny Isaiah 9:6-7 (5-6) as being understood as Messianic in Judaism are not being truthful in their comments. Though some see Hezekiah fulfilling these verses such as Rabbi Hillel, other Jewish interpreters such as Bar Kapparah write Hezekiah fell far short. (See b. Sanhedrin 94a).

The reason we know this verse is clearly messianic is because it refers to the everlasting throne of King David. This characteristic is unmistakable in scripture. To deny these verses as messianic, would be to deny scripture itself. Lets examine the nature of the this child's authority.

- Government will be upon His shoulder
- Increase of His government and peace There will be no end
- Upon the throne of David
- Over His kingdom
- Establish it with judgment and justice
- Even forever

First if this verse is not talking about the Messiah, then who is it talking about? The Messiah according to scripture will do everything mentioned here. Just ask yourself these questions,

- Can there be two eternal kings, sitting on one throne of King David?
- If the government is on His shoulder for eternity what does the Messiah do?
- Since this person is over David's kingdom, who whose kingdom is Messiah over?

No, clearly this is Messianic in nature, the eternal nature of the throne makes this verse non-sense if applied to another person other then Messiah. The Lord, through Nathan the prophet proclaimed to David, about his descendent, his throne would be eternal.

13 "He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 2 Sam. 7:13

Jeremiah refers to the descendent of David as the "Branch" clearly understood by Jewish interpreters to refer to the Messiah. (See also Isaiah 11:1, Zechariah 3:8, Zechariah 6:12)

5 "Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord, "That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, And execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.

6 In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell safely; Now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS **Jeremiah 23:5-6**

The Nature of the Messiah in Isaiah 9:6-7

Objection 2 *Even if these verses refer to the Messiah, it does not mean Messiah is God, they are given as a name, not as a charcter.*

Reply to Objection 2

Whether this refers to Messiah or not is not really the question, since many ancient Jewish commentators clearly see this as referring to the Messiah. The most important question is, does this verse reveal the nature of Messiah, being God?

The "child is born" and "son is given" is called by names, which are clearly associated with God. The names associated with Messiah also reflect his nature, this is the purpose of the name. Names are used throughout scripture to reflect the person being called. For example Hagar calls God, (*El Ro'iy*) after reassures her in Genesis 16:13.

Then she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees; for she said, "Have I also here seen Him who sees me?" Genesis 16;13

Mighty God אל גבור (El Gabor)

The name used to describe the Messiah is *El Gabor* (אל גבור) mighty God. This phrase is only used 3 times in the Tanakh, Isaiah 10:21 and Ezekiel 32:21. Only in Isaiah, is it used as a name.

21 The remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, To the Mighty God. Isaiah 10:21

Everlasting Father אב-עד (Ab-Ad)

This term is used only once in the Hebrew Bible, here in Isaiah 9:6 (5). Here the Messiah is called by a name if which, when combined with Mighty God would be considered blasphemous if the Messiah were not who the name proclaims Him to be. The idea of an eternal messiah, is clearly presented in scripture. In Isaiah 9:7 we are told about Messiah's reign, "*There will be no end*" and it will be "*even forever*". Here the Messiah is called, everlasting father a term which could easily be seen as blasphemous, if Messiah the term did not match the person.

Prince of Peace שר-שלום (Sar Shalom)

__This term also reflects the nature of Messiah, who will rule the nations bring them into submission. The Second Psalm reflects the role Messiah will play on the earth, and peacemaker. He will rule the earth and bring peace through his presence.

8 Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession.

9 You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel." " Psalm 2:8-9

The "Branch" of Jesse, the Son of David, will even cause the animals to transform their wildness to peaceful coexistence with humanity.

7 The cow and the bear shall graze; Their young ones shall lie down together; And the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

8 The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. Isaiah 11;7-8

The names applied in Isaiah 9:6 (5) reflect both the character and nature of Messiah. Showing him to be